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EMBASSY PASS TO MARY KING, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, ACTION

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO USUN NEW YORK, GENEVA,
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QUOTE UNCLAS NAIROBI 11757

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS

E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SENV, OCON, UN
SUBJ: UN DESERTIFICATION CONFERENCE -- WRAP-UP AND OVERVIEW

SUMMARY - UN DESERTIFICATION CONFERENCE (UNCOD) CONCLUDED
9:00 P.M. FRIDAY AFTER APPROVING: GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION
DESIGNED TO CURB DESERTIFICATION BY YEAR 2000; INSTITU-
TIONAL AND FINANCIAL MACHINERY TO ENSURE PROMPT AND
EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP; AND SERIES OF SEPARATE RESOLUTIONS
OF LARGELY A POLITICAL NATURE. ATMOSPHERE OF COOPERATION,
CONCILIATION AND CONSENSUS WHICH CHARACTERIZED MEETING
SOMEWHAT MARRED ON FINAL DAY BY FAILURE TO AGREE ON
NECESSARY FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS. OVERALL, UNCOD, MUCH
IN PATTERN OF WATER CONFERENCE, WITH POLITICAL ISSUES
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PRESENT AND HIGHLY VISIBLE, YET NOT OBSTRUCTING OR UNDULY
DETRACTING FROM THE MAJOR WORK OF THE MEETING.

1. UNCOD, HELD 29-AUG-9SEPT, NAIROBI. ATTRACTED 700
OFFICIAL DELEGATES FROM 95 COUNTRIES, 4 LIBERATION COUNCILS,
32 UN AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND 44 NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS. AS MANDATED BY ENABLPNG UNGA RESOLUTION
(3337-XXIX OF 17 DEC. 74), CONFERENCE: (A) APPROVED WORLD
MAPHOF AREAS AFFECTED BY AND VULNERABLE TO DESERTIFICATION;
(B) ASSESSED AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON DESERTIFICATION

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CAUSES AND EFFECTS; AND (C) ENDORSED "COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED ACTION PROGRAMME AGAINST DESERTIFICATION, INCLUDING BUILDING UP OF INDIGENOUS AND AUTONOMOUS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY."

2. WORLD MAP: UNCOD APPROVED FAO/UNESCO/UNEP-PREPARED MAP "AS FIRST APPROXIMATION", REFLECTING NUMEROUS COMPLAINTS ABOUT POLITICAL AND DESERTIFICATION BOUNDERIES. CHINESE AND BRAZILIANS PWRTICULARLY CRITICAL, WITH LATTER SEEKING WHEREVER POSSIBLE TO EXPRESS VIEW THAT BRAZILO NOT CURRENTLY AFFECTED BY "DERSERTIFICATION".

3. CAUSES AND EFFECTS: DEBATE REVEALED BROAD AGREEMENT THAT CLIMATE, WHILE IMPORTANT LONG-TERM FACTOR, IS SUB-CORDINATE TO MAN AS PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF DESERTIFI-CATION. ALSO, THAT EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND INSTITUTIONS SUFFICIENT TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT INROAD IN DESERTIFICA-TION PROCESS. SURPRISING ABSENCE OF DISCUSSION OF OFTEN CAPTIVATING, EXOTIC SOLUTIONS (E.G., WEATHER MODIFICATION, ICEBERG TOWING, DESALINATION, SOLAR ENERGY). ONLY CONTROVERSY INVOLVED SCOPE OF "DESERTIFI-CATION", WITH ETHIOPIA, AUSTRIA AND ZAIRE SEEKING, WITHOUT MUCH SCUESS, TO BRING IN WOODED UPLANDS AND UNCLASSIFIED

HUMID TROPICS. EMPHASIS REMAINED ON PROBLEMS OF OVER-GRAZING, POOR AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES, MISMANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, AND (TO LESS DEGREE) ON POPULATION GROWTH AND MOVEMENT IN WORLD'S DRYLANDS AND DESERT REGIONS.

4. PLAN OF ACTION: CONFERENCE APPROVED 90-PAGE ACTION PLAN, CONTAINING 26 PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS PLUS SERIES OF IMMEDIATE ACTIONS, DESIGNED TO (ACCORDING TO UNCOD SEC-GEN TOLBA) "ACHIEVE ZERO DESERTIFICATION GROWTH BY YEAR 2000". PLAN QUITE SIMILAR TO DRAFT INTRODUCED TO CONFERENCE, EXCEPT FOR NEW SECTIONS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS (CALLED FOR BY MEXICO); INDUS-TRIALIZATION AND URBANIZATION (USSR); PUBLIC PARTICIPA-TION (SWEDEN); ROLE OF WOMEN (NORWAY); INTEGRATED PHYSICAL PLANNING (ITALY); NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NETHERLANDS); LAND-WILDLIFE CONSERVATION INCLUDING OFF-ROAD VEHICLE REGULATION (URUGUAY); AND CLIMATE (US). USDEL PLAYED MAJOR ROLE IN REVISING INITIALLY CONTENTIOUS LANGUAGE IN FIRST TWO OF THESE, AND ENDED UP AS CO-SPONSORS. MAJOR POINTS OF CONTROVERSY INVOLVED SHARED RIVER BASINS, WITH BANGLADESH INSISTENCE ON GOING BEYOND WATER CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS CONSUMING INORDINATE AMOUNT OF TIME. ACCEPTABLE LANGUAGE WORKED OUT WITH INDIA AND BRAZIL, WITH LATTER HOWEVER STAKING OUT POSITION THAT SINCE IT ISN'T AFFECTED BY DESERTIFICATION, IT CAN'T BE BOUND BY LANGUAGE

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WHICH IS CLEARLY APPLICABLE TO SITUATIONS IN WHICH
SHARED WATER PROBLEMS OCCUR IN DESERTIFIED AREAS.
SECOND ISSUE INVOLVED FUTURE OF NOMADIC PEOPLES WITH
US TAKING LEAD IN OPPOSING SOMALI'S VIEW THAT SEDENTARI-
ZATION (A NATIONAL POLICY FOR SOMALIA) IS A PRINCIPAL
WEAPON IN FIGHT AGAINST DESERTIFICATION. MODIFIED
LANGUAGE IN PLAN, AND ACCOMPANYING CONFERENCE
REPORT, MAKES CLUEAR US VIEW (SHARED BY INTER ALIA
FRANCE, UK, SWEDEN, NETHERLAND) THAT CAREFUL STUDIES
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OF PROS AND CONS MUST BE BASIS FOR NOMAD POLICIES, AND
THAT NOMADISM MAY BE BEST USE OF LAND. OVERALL, CON-
FERENCE WAS IN GENERAL AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS
OF PLAN. DEBATE INVOLVED RELATIVELY MINOR AMENDMENTS
WITH VERY FEW DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS ON SUBSTANTIAL MATTERS.
IN LINE WITH U.S. PREFERENCE, UNCOD AGREED TO LEAVE
DECISION ON VARIETY OF NEW REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS
PROPOSED IN DRAFT PLAN TO POST-FONFERENCE REGIONAL
MEETINGS WHICH WILL BE HELD.

5. INSTITUTIONAL/FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: THESE CON-
STITUTE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF PLAN OF ACTION AND WERE
ADDRESSED BY INTER-REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED
BY UNCOD COMMITTEE OF WHOLE. QUICK AGREEMENT REACHED
ON ASSIGNING UNEP RESPONSIBILITY (I.E. "VERY SMALL"
COORDINATION UNIT IN UNEP, GOVERNING COUNCIL TO PROVIDE
GOVERNMENTAL OVERVIEW, AND ECB HAVING INTERAGENCY
COORDINATION ROLE). BROAD CONSENSUS FOR STRENGTHENING
ROLE OF REGIONAL COMMISSIONS LED TO LANGUAGE WHICH WOULD
VEST THEM WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR "EXECUTING INTRA-
REGIONAL PROGRAMS." U.S. OBJECTED TO THIS AND FOOTNOTE
ADDED TO LIMIT MANBATE. FINANCIAL ARRANGMENETS PROVED
VERY DIFFICULT, FORCING VOTES ON THREE ISSUES. FINAL
ACTION CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ESTABLISHMENT OF PERMANENT
CONSULTATIVE GROUP OF MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL
ASSISTANCE AGENCIES PLUS DEVELOPING COUNTRY
REPS.; CREATION BY UNGA OF A "SPECIAL ACCOUNT" FOR
THE FINANCING OF DESERTIFICATION PROGRAMS; AND ASTUDY
OF POSSIBLE OTHER MEASURES (E.G., FUNDS IN TRUST;
INTERNATIONAL TAXATION SCHEMES). US-SPONSORED PROPOSAL
FOR INTERIM CONSULTATIVE GROUP TO ANALYZE AND RECOMMEND
PERMANENT FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENT WAS VOTED DOWN. LIKELIHOOD
OF FAVORABLE ACTION ON US PROPOSAL VIRTUALLY NIL
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GIVEN UNCOD SEC-GEN'S HEAVY LOBBYING WITH LDCS FOR
SOMETHING "MORE THAN ANOTHER STUDY BY EXPERRT GROUP".

6. POLITICAL ASPECTS: (COVERED IN EARLIER CABLES).

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PRINCIPALLY INVOLVED FOLLOWING: SHARED RIVER BASINS (BANGLADESH AMENDMENTS TO ACTION PLAN); CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS OF WAR (CAPE VERDE RESOLUTION); FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (AFGHANISTAN, AND OTHERS, RESOLUTION); CONDEMNATION OF ISREAELI NEGEV STUDY (SYRIA, AND OTHERS, RESOLUTION); NAMIBIA (UN COUNCIL FOR NAMIBIA), AND BANTUSTAN CONDEMNATION (CAPE VERDE RESOLUTION). ALL RESOLUTIONS WERE ADOPTED BY CONSENSUS WITH ECEPTION OF ISRAELI-NEGEV ISSUE WHICH REQUIRED VOTE (WITH U.S. IN OPPOSITION). ANOTHER MORE RELEVANT RESOLUTION BY SENERGAL CALLING FOR INCREASED ASSISTANCE TO DROUGHT-STRIKEN SAHEL COUNTRIES APPROVED BY CONSENSUS. ALTHOUGH THESE ITEMS WERE TIME-CONSUMING DISTRACTIONS, THEY WERE HANDLED RELATIVELY EFFICIENTLY AND DID NOT SPARK FIREWORKS AND BITTERNESS.

7. U.S. ROLE: USDEL PROMINENT BY VIRTURE OF SIZE AND PARTICIPATIOM, PROVIDING VICE-PRESIDENT, "FRIEND" OF RAPPORTEUR-GENERAL, AND CHAIRMAN OF WEOG WORKING GROUP ON INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS. US ALSO TOOK LEAD IN DRAFTING PROPOSALS ON FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS AROUND PWHICH OTHER WEO MEMBERS RALLIED, AND ON CLIMATE RESEARCH WHICH 15 OTHER DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS CO-SPONSORED. DELEGATION ALSO ABLE TO INTRODUCE INTO PLAN OF ACTION AND CONFERENCE REPORT ALL MAJOR SUB-STANTIVE POINTS SET FORTH IN POSITION PAPERS, INCLUDING VIEWS ON CLIMATE, NOMADS, DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES. POPULA-TION PROBLEMS, MONITORING POTENTIAL AND CAUTIONS, LAND MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS, AND FACT THAT ACTION AT NATIONAL LEVEL IS PRINCIPAL NEED. ONLY FAILURE INVOLVED FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS. US STATEMENTS ON PROPOSALS FOUND GOOD UNCLASSIFIED

RECEPTIVITY BY VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER DELEGATIONS, AND U.S. WAS ABLE TO JOIN WITH NUMBER OF UNLIKELY COUNTRIES IN CO-SPONSORING VARIETY OF AMENDMENTS AND PROPOSALS. POTENTIAL CONTROVERSIES FAILED TO MATERIALIZE ON SEVERAL OCCASTIONS WHEN USEL FEARED WORSE (E.G., US SOUGHT AND GAINED CHANGE TO CONFERENCE DRAFT REPORT WHICH IMPOED THAT COUNTRY PERMISSION WOULD BE REQUIRED BEFORE SATELLITE-BASED MONITORING COULD BE CARRIED OUT).

8. ROLE OF OTHER COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS: AFRICAN COUNTRIES WERE PREDICTABLY THE DOMINANT FORCE (WITH UNCOD SEC-GEN FROM EGYPT, THE PRESIDENT FROM KENYA, AN AFRICAN SETTING AND THE CONFERENCE TRIGGERED BY THE SAHELIAN DROUGHT). CROSS-SECTION OF AFRICAN STATES BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH OF SAHARA QUITE ACTIVE ON BOTH TECHNICAL AND POLITICAL FRONTS, WITH LEADERS ALGERIA, LIBYA, CHAD, EGYPT, KENYA, MAURITANIA, SENEGAL, TANZANIA, ETHIOPIA, ZAIRE, SOMALIA AND UPPER VOLTA. MIDDLE EAST

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COUNTRIES WERE EXCEPTIONALLY LOW-PROFILE, WITH OIL-
PRODUCERS VIRTUALLY SILENT. UNCOD SEC-GEN'S INABILITY
TO INVOLVE THEM ACTIVELY DESPITE REPEATED TRIES IN
PRE-CONFERENCE PERIOD ILUUSTRATED BY ABSTENTIONS ON
MATTER OF SPECIAL FINANCIAL ACCOUNT. ONLY IRAN AND
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES PLAYED ACTIVE ROLE. ISRAEL MADE
ONLY TWO BRIEF COMMENTS IN COMMITTEE. THE GDR WAS
PRINCIPAL EASTERN BLOCK LEADER WITH ROMANIA ALSO VISIBLE.
VERY LIMITED PARTICIPATION OF 16-MAN SOVIET UNION
DELEGATION SURPRISING GIVEN EXTENSIVE PREPARATORY EFFORT.
ROLE CONFINED TO FEW SPARES TECHNICAL INTERVENTIONS
BEYOND PREOCCUPATION WITH ADDING NEW SECTION TO ACTION
PLAN ON INDUSTRIALIZATION AND URBANIZATION IN ARID
ZONES. INDIA, BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN QUITE ACTIVE IN
THE SMALL ASIAN COUNTRY CONTINGENT, ALTHOUGH FIRST TWO
UNCLASSIFIED

PRINCIPALLY SEIZED WITH SHARED WATER RESOURCES PROBLEMS.
CHINA (WITH 10-MAN POLITICAL-TECHNICAL COMBINATION)
QUIET EXCEPT FOR 3-4 SHORT INTERVENTIONS IN COMMITTEE
PLUS PLENARY STATEMENT. MAJOR CONCERNS SEEMED TO BE
BOUNDARIES ON MAPS, DOCUMENT CITATIONS TO TAIWAN, AND
IDENTIFICATION WITH INTEREST OF THIRD WORLD. LATIN
AMERICAN COUNTRIES LED BY URUGUAY (LARGELY BECAUSE
ITS PRINCIPAL REP WAS COMMITTEE RAPPORTEUR) WITH
COLOMBIA AND MEXICO ALSO QUITE ACTIVE. BRAZIL AND
ARGENTINA PREOCCUPIED WITH SHARED WATER ISSUES. CHILE
DELEGATION LARGELY UNINVOLVED IN DEBATE, ALTHOUGH ACTIVE
BEHIND SCENE. ONE OF THE PLUSES FOR USDEL WAS GOOD WORKING
RELATIONSHIP WITH MEXICO DELEGATION WHICH GREW DIRECTLY
OUT OF PRE-CONFERENCE BILATERAL MEETING IN TUCSON. THIS CLEARLY
ENABLED COLLABORATION ON "SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS"
SECTION OF ACTION PLAN, RESULTING IN MODERATE,
REALISTIC AND NON-CONTROVERSIAL LANGUAGE WHICH THE
USDEL BELIEVES WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.
AUSTRALIA, AS CHAIRMAN OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AND OTHERS
GROUP PALYED QUITE ACTIVE ROLE AS DID MOST ALL OTHER
WEOG MEMBERS (ESP. FRANCE, NETHERLANDS, SWEDEN, NORWAY).
CANADA, FRG, JAPAN, UK, AND ITALY CONCENTRATED LARGELY
ON FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES; AND BELGIUM ON CLIMATE.
THE UN AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS: THE IBRD WAS CONSPICUOUSLY
NOT INVOLVED, AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES' ROLE WAS
LARGELY CONFINED TO ENSURING THAT THEIR ONGOING PROGRAMS
WERE NOTED AND NOT COMPROMISED BY ANY NEW ACTIONS
APPROVED BY CONFERENCE. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
PRESENTED SEVERAL SHORT STATEMENTS BUT WERE HARDLY
NOTICEABLE, QUITE UNLIKE WATER CONFERENCE. LEMELLE
UNQUOTE VANCE

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